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Raising Roma Educational Participation and Achievement: Collaborative Relationships, Transformative Change, and a Social Europe

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The paper gives an overview of Roma, Gypsy and Traveller (RGT) educational exclusion in the European Union and seeks to provide insights into good practice through case studies focusing on Bulgaria and the UK. The paper makes a case for the promotion of collaborative relationships, where RGT communities are active partners in developing curricula and decision-making in school. It is argued in the paper that such action needs to be made in tandem with interventionist and redistributive policy frameworks at the national and European level.

Cet article offre un aperçu général de l'exclusion éducative pour les Roms, les Tsiganes et les gens du voyage (RTG) dans l'union européenne et cherche à éclairer les meilleures pratiques en se penchant sur des études de cas portant sur la Bulgarie et le Royaume-Uni. Cet article fait la promotion de relations de collaboration au sein desquels les communautés RTG constituent des partenaires actifs dans le développement des programmes d'études et des prises de décisions à l'école. L'article fait valoir qu'une telle démarche doit être accompagnée de cadres de politiques interventionnistes et redistributives aux échelles nationales et européennes.

Roma communities constitute Europe's largest ethnic minority, estimated to number in the region of 10-12 million people.[1] These groups are not homogenous but despite their diversity many share common experiences of multiple forms of marginalisation which include economic, spatial and racial exclusion, factors which accentuate institutional and educational exclusion. Education has long been heralded as a key component, a "silver bullet", in facilitating the inclusion of Roma communities and has often been coupled with culturally normative agendas and/or at best narrow skills integration discourses (Liégeois, 2007). In other words, curricula and learning experiences for Roma, have been assimilatory focusing on forms of cultural conformity in which the value of traditional pedagogical practices and group traditions have been dismissed. In such narratives exclusion is pathologised and centred on the individual; hence there is a perception that through education and increased social mobility the problems facing the Roma can be overcome, a viewpoint which critics argue neglects the necessity of structural change (Ryder et al., 2014).

Schools have been overt agents of segregation through the maintenance of ghetto schools

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which serve spatially segregated areas and/or segregated classes within mixed schools and/or unfair classification of Roma pupils as having impaired learning abilities and therefore in need of special and often separate education. In addition, discrimination and bullying has deterred participation in school (Taba & Ryder, 2012). Multiple forms of exclusion for Roma communities have been "traumagenic" (Sztompka, 2004), intensely painful and touching many aspects of life, leaving a profound mark upon group consciousness. Thus in view of the exclusion experienced in school it is not surprising that some Roma communities are said to have an ambivalent and wary attitude towards educational institutions. The paper argues inclusive schooling for Roma communities can be fostered through collaborative relationships which can play an important role in reversing educational exclusion but needs to be implemented in tandem with structural change and strategic and legal interventions. In this sense the author has been greatly influenced in his work in the fields of activism and research (including the sentiments contained within this paper) by the concept of critical pedagogy.[2] Critical pedagogy involves deliberation and reflection where communities can achieve a form of critical consciousness and grassroots mobilisation (Darder, 2002; Freire, 1972). This critical consciousness leads to a change in attitude of those oppressed and ultimately to their mobilisation for social change, which is transformative in the sense that change is structural and redistributive.

One of the points made in this article is that acute marginalisation, as reflected in extreme forms of socio-economic and spatial exclusion, is being intensified by the economic crisis and the onward march of neoliberalism. Roma communities have been described as a bellwether (indicator) of wider socio-economic trends and dangers (Filcak & Skobla, 2012); their comparatively weak levels of social, cultural and economic capital leaves them vulnerable to the vagaries of an economic system that has steadily moved away from post war conceptions of social justice through downward harmonisation which embraces high unemployment, the dilution of welfare support and the pathologisation of those at the margins. Developed economies are in effect whittling down labour and human rights and wage protection to compete with developing economies (Acton & Ryder, 2013).

It should be noted that there are some Roma communities, who are looking to and working with community organisations, which indicates that formalised forms of collectivity can also provide a coping mechanism to address exclusion. Through a series of case studies from the U.K. and Bulgaria the article seeks to provide insights into the effectiveness of grassroots orientated initiatives in raising educational inclusion. First, though, the paper explores in more depth the current policy frameworks in which Roma community organisations currently have to operate within in a European context.

Policy and Advocacy Frameworks

Current policy frameworks in Europe offer the prospect of mixed fortunes with regards to their potential to promote inclusive schooling and community development for Roma communities. Despite the fact that the Roma issue appears to have climbed the political agenda, as evidenced by the growing array of policy initiatives in this area, there are grounds for apprehension as to what the future may hold. A critical point of concern is the impact of the financial crisis of 2008: Roma communities have been amongst the greatest losers of the crisis as unemployment and corresponding poverty and ghettoisation have consigned many families to ever greater and acute levels of poverty. In turn the financial crisis has prompted across Europe "austerity policies" in

which policies and programmes which once supported inclusion have been radically cut back (Richardson, 2012).

More broadly the ability of Roma communities to articulate their aspirations and promote and influence policy agendas which can address their core needs is also being reduced as a consequence of the perilous situation in which Roma civil society now finds itself, where capacity-building funding is either being cut or restricted to narrow donor driven agendas (ERGO, 2015). The capacity of Roma civil society has been further limited by forms of "NGOisation", which through bureaucracy and managerialism leads to disconnect with Roma communities (Trehan, 2001). In addition, it has been argued that educated Roma have become "experts" absorbed into NGO bureaucracies but no longer grounded in the communities whence they came or aspire to advocate for (Van Baar, 2013).

Thus the support does not seem to be there to help Roma communities at a grassroots level to develop agency and forms of "critical consciousness" that can be mobilised to pursue transformative change. To date there has been a failure to forge a sustained Europe-wide based campaign centred on educational inclusion that is strongly grounded in local communities. Such a campaign focused on desegregation and educational inequality, set within the context of wider exclusion, would be of value. In such mobilisation, cultural capital and formalised education will have a role and although the author acknowledges the value of "organic intellectuals" and their potential in transformative campaigns, the educated Roma elite will have an invaluable role to play in articulating community aspirations and acting as "outsider catalysts."

The Roma activist Nicolae Gheorghe longed to see more of the emerging cadre of educated and professional Roma civil society workers, who are engaged in more strategic work, return to the grassroots and collaborative forms of activism (Gheorghe with Pulay, 2013). This aspiration reflected Gheorghe's desire to close the disconnect that had emerged between communities and the professionalised Roma cadre but also realisation of the value they could ultimately play in more inclusive advocacy campaigns and their ability to act as bridges between Roma and non-Roma communities. A new critical mood amongst Roma activists appears to be emerging, which has been referred to as the "Roma Awakening", where educated and professional Roma activists appear to be searching for means by which Roma communities at the margins can be more effectively galvanised in transformative campaigns (Acton & Ryder, 2015). It remains to be seen whether these hopes and aspirations will materialise into grounded initiatives which can help mobilise Roma parents more effectively in institutional decision-making including schools.

Another by-product of the financial crisis has been the rise in xenophobia against ethnic minority and migrant groups. Thus, the Roma at the margins in ghettoised communities or as migrants in pursuit of a better life have become scapegoats for the ills of society, vilified in the media and/or political discourse as illegitimate welfare seekers and job takers. Some recent headlines from the U.K. tabloid press which conjure up images of welfare dependency and deviancy with reference to Roma migrants reveal the intemperance of reporting (Decade for Roma Inclusion Secretariat, 2014–U.K. Report). Such negative perceptions all too often find their way into school, leading to bullying and intolerance and/or a lack of trust and faith in school (Ureche & Franks, 2007). More widely, xenophobia and forms of nationalism have prompted policy makers to turn away from multicultural policy frameworks to ones which are monocultural and contain a narrow integrative focus. Thus the scope for intercultural dialogue and/or collaborative partnerships between Roma communities and schools, encompassing tailored or targeted action, is restricted.

On a more optimistic note there are some glimmers of hope. In 2008, the EU, together with

sections of Roma civil society, endorsed the Roma Platform and a manifesto to guide inclusive policy making which promoted interculturalism and appropriate targeted action. Moreover, the manifesto called for partnership and coproduction between Roma communities and policy makers (Ryder et al., 2014). Reflecting this mood for partnership the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies was launched in 2011 by the European Commission (the initiatives are focused not just on those who style themselves as Roma but also Gypsies and Travellers). The Framework is based on open method coordination (Meyer, 2010) and EU member states are expected to devise National Roma Integration Strategies which address exclusion in the spheres of employment, health, education and accommodation. The Framework was launched with much fanfare, and the then EU Vice President Viviane Reding described it as "the beginning of a new future" (European Commission, 2011a),

However, some of the optimism that the EU Roma Framework initially aroused has evaporated. Despite entreaties for partnership, a common complaint that has arisen from Roma, Gypsy and Traveller civil society is that it has either been ignored in the formulation of national action plans or has been accorded a tokenistic say in design and delivery (Ryder et al., 2014). The European Roma Rights Centre (2016,) recently concluded "Five years on, the EU Framework has hit 'a mid-life crisis'. The NRIS have yet to deliver in terms of concrete change to the lives of millions of Europe's Romani citizens; the implementation gap is more pronounced than ever; discrimination and segregation remain pervasive and human rights abuses against Roma are all too frequent" (p. 1). In addition, there has been criticism of the fact that as a consequence of the deliberative nature of open method coordination (OMC) the EU has little influence or control. Kröger (2009) has described OMC as a soft form of governance, a form of policy development based on advice and persuasion. Others (Bailey, 2008; O'Connor, 2005), however, have argued that in fact the OMC is over-friendly to neoliberalism and does little to challenge power and wealth differentials between countries. It has also been contended that the EU finds inclusive engagement difficult, as it is bureaucratic, complex and hierarchical (De La Porte & Pochet, 2005), thus at the European level Roma civil society feels that it has been marginalised in decision-making and strategizing (Rorke, 2011).

A key criticism is that insufficient money has been allocated to address the issue, indeed it should be noted that in this age of austerity policy many governments are moving away from progressive and redistributive economic policies. Grassroots organisations have been unable to effectively access EU funding (Rorke, 2014). More broadly, narrow notions of development have been evident for Roma communities and constitute a form of control, through the concepts of governmentality, which normalises neoliberal and assimilative policy agendas, and "responsibilisation", which individualises and pathologises the victims rather than the structural agents of exclusion (Van Baar, 2013; Foucault, 1997). In the sphere of education such notions have negative implications for Roma communities castigating them as lacking motivation and being uninterested in educational achievement.

In spite of the weakness and failings of current policy frameworks the paper proceeds to argue that through forms of community mobilisation inspired by critical pedagogy, Roma communities can achieve meaningful and transformative change. However, the steps in this process can initially be gradual and localised and then become stronger and bolder through the acquisition of skills and insights into the nature of oppression (critical consciousness). To demonstrate the validity of community empowerment two case studies centred on education are presented from Bulgaria and the U.K.

Critical Pedagogy

Freire provides a critical lens through which intercultural and awareness raising projects are seen as insufficient in addressing the need for true collaborative relationships. Collaborative relationships are the pinnacle of the different types of home/school relations; they integrate the resources of both the school and community and are built on partnership and dialogue (Feiler, 2010). Inclusive Community Development (ICD) which is asset based and builds on and develops existing skills and cultural practices, and is community driven but also upskilling (Craig et al. 2011; Gilchrist & Taylor, 2011) can be an important dynamic in creating inclusive schools. As noted at the start of the paper critical pedagogy, which advocates dialogue, empowerment and transformative change, is a central concept within the paper. Critical pedagogy cautions against a reliance on mechanical and systematic processes of change arguing that these alone cannot bring about inclusive restructuring, but instead forms of social learning are required in an institutional context. In a school context this could lead to forms of collaboration involving staff, pupils and parents in problem identification, the development of inclusive strategies but also joint work in the delivery of solutions (Ainscow, 1999). Thus "learning communities" are formed where school staff works collaboratively with parents and pupils in processes of mutual learning that leads to reform of the learning environment (Lee, 2001). Empowerment of both communities and teaching staff also builds up the confidence to rise to new challenges, but in the process Roma can be invested with agency, a state of affairs which breaks the stereotype of passivity, neediness and victimhood (Timmer, 2010).

A note of caution is warranted though: there may be limits in the potential of school-centred reforms given the fact that research has demonstrated the profound links between poverty and educational exclusion for a wide body of students, including Roma, Gypsies and Travellers (Raffo et al., 2007). In addition, it has been demonstrated that forms of cultural and racial exclusion, often reflected through forms of institutional racism for ethnic minorities, compounds exclusion, a point which again has relevance for Roma pupils (Rostas, 2012). Thus, efforts to establish inclusive schools for Roma are confronted by serious obstacles and challenges.

In contrast to more emancipatory policy approaches critics have argued that mediatory work through Traveller Education Support Services and/or school mediators can become service-driven and problematise Roma, leading to forms of paternalism that disempower and are centred on sustaining ethnic outsider personnel in positions reliant on the dependency and the clientism of Roma. This has been termed the "Gypsy Industry" (Ryder et al., 2014). The author acknowledges the dangers of such approaches but believes that communities, groups and agencies like Traveller Education Support Services can work strategically to foster collaborative relationships, which incorporate inclusive forms of community development. Such work should place community members at the centre of planning and delivery, but initially it might take more mediatory forms to enable trust to be established between the parties, for community members to gain confidence and advocacy skills and school staff to develop a degree of cultural sensitivity. Rather than picturing a horizontal hierarchy of empowerment, ranging from "therapy" to "citizen's control" as articulated in Arnstein's (1969) "ladder of citizen participation", it may be more appropriate to envisage a scaffold which would indicate different starting points and trajectories of empowerment, but which aim to reach the pinnacle of the hierarchy Arnstein maps out (Ryder, 2014). What may be perceived as tokenistic community involvement in the work of schools may in fact be the first tentative steps for Roma, Gypsy and

Traveller parents towards collaborative relationships and forms of critical pedagogy.

Inclusive Strategies in Bulgaria

In the Communist system in Central Eastern Europe school was seen by the authorities as a tool by which the Roma could be "proletarianised"; the Roma were in effect viewed through a "culture of poverty" lens and their culture was perceived to be dysfunctional. Schools were charged by the state to instil more normative behaviour (Rostas, 2012). In Bulgaria during the Communist system, despite some Roma experiencing ghettoised and segregated schooling, illiteracy fell dramatically from over 80% in 1946 to 11% in 1989 (Russinov, 2015)

A notable project was school desegregation which was started by Roma NGOs in 2000 with financial support from the Open Society Institute and later the Roma Education Fund. An estimated 20,000 Roma children in eleven Bulgarian towns were integrated into mainstream schooling over a twelve-year period and was apparently a stimulus for the Decade for Roma Inclusion [3] initiative as well as the establishment of the Roma Education Fund, a lead European grant awarding any advocacy group that seeks to raise Roma educational inclusion (Russinov, 2015). The desegregation model involved bussing Roma pupils from the Roma ghetto to schools where Roma could participate in a mixed learning environment. The use of bussing, which was widely adopted in the U.S.A. as an instrument for desegregation, is an approach that arouses some controversy. Critics note that such an approach does not challenge wider socio-economic exclusion which exists beyond the classroom, whilst the defenders of bussing argue that it is a means by which marginalised children can access better quality education within a short timeframe. For some bussing is an interim measure which should run parallel to broader long-term structural change that would address spatial, economic and racial exclusion. Regardless of the pros and cons of bussing, community participation was instrumental in the desegregation initiative as was Roma leadership and coalition building, which reached into Roma communities at the grassroots. Rumyan Russinov (then Director of the OSI Roma Participation Programme and former Director of the Human Rights Project) and Donka Panajotova (a former teacher and leader of the NGO Drom) were at the forefront of this initiative. Russinov and Panajotova were able to enthuse and galvanise a range of partners who, including Romani parents, were initially sceptical about the idea of desegregation (Community Planning Website 2009). According to Russinov the community support for bussing that eventually emerged gave the campaign credibility and momentum:

> When I approached them [the government] to negotiate the [framework programme for Roma integration] the government tried to ignore us, as expected. The government at that time did not have a culture of listening to the voice of civil society. When I approached them to negotiate...their reaction was, 'who are you young man?' You are not legitimate'. To a certain extent, this was true, because I was an NGO activist, no one voted for me to be a representative of Roma in these negotiations. The way to become legitimate was to mobilise the big support from Roma NGOs and activists throughout the country. (Rostas 2012, p. 135)

In the opinion of Russinov the popular support they were able to mobilise made it impossible for the government to continue to ignore them. Dialogue with Roma parents was also integral to overcoming fears and hesitations, and a team of people from the NGO sector were engaged in ongoing dialogue and communication with parents (Rostas, 2012). According to

Russinov this mobilisation overcame a number of perceptions and myths which impeded desegregation, namely: (1) Roma parents would not allow their children to attend school because of fears of harassment and/or were indifferent to educational achievement because of lower aspirations. (2) Roma children would not be accepted by their peers in mainstream schools, and parents would withdraw their children from the schools where Roma are admitted. (3) Roma children would struggle with the higher academic standards (Community Planning Website 2009). The improved levels of educational participation and achievement attained by these Roma pupils demonstrated the viability of the desegregation initiative. Roma parental involvement played an important role in this desegregation by establishing effective communication and involvement in the desegregation process with the schools to which their children were bussed. To facilitate this, training sessions and lectures for parents were organised (Kyuchukov 2007). Furthermore, Roma school desegregation campaigners engaged in dialogue with non-Roma parents, local authorities, teachers and school directors.

The de-segregation initiative sought to actively engage the local Romani community and to garner the support of non-Roma, through a sustained media campaign and mediated the inclusion of Roma parents on the school boards and held a series of training seminars on multicultural education, ethnic tolerance and the history and culture of minority groups, whose primary beneficiaries were practising teachers working in the newly integrated classes. The project also had a social component, free school materials for the children from the most impoverished families, supplementary tuition provided to some Romani children in order to meet the new educational standards, and extracurricular activities involving Roma and non-Roma children and their parents (Rostas, 2012).

Despite the success of this desegregation project its replication has been limited because the Bulgarian government and other administrations in Central Eastern Europe have been reluctant to take or endorse such forms of intervention. Large-scale desegregation has not been stimulated by the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies or the similar framework entitled the Decade for Roma Inclusion, which Bulgaria participated in from 2005 (see Footnote 3). Hence, references to desegregation in these frameworks have tended to be symbolic or mute and there has been an absence of clear and decisive action plans to create inclusive learning experiences for Roma children. This intransigence reflects a genuine lack of political will and resolve and in turn a reluctance by majoritarian society to see fundamental change. In addition, during the transition period the Bulgarian government influenced by neoliberal approaches became increasingly reticent to intervene. According to Russinov (2015) this position meant that the government took a passive role on the Roma issue and narrowed its function to coordination of already operating NGO Roma projects.

Although the desegregation initiative in Bulgaria failed in its objective of prompting wider replication it should be noted that grassroots educational initiatives involving dialogue and community involvement continue to be practised in some parts of Bulgaria. A recent report by the Francois-Xavier Bagnoud Centre for Health and Human Rights at Harvard University (FXB, 2015) has noted that a key element in addressing segregation is community empowerment and involvement. Amongst the examples presented, FXB explores the work of Integro an NGO in Bulgaria, which through “bottom up” action focuses on Romani community development and social innovation in a holistic programme that empowers teachers and Romani parents. An important dynamic is the mentoring and support of pupils through a peer network that shapes its own agenda.

However, initiatives focused on community involvement remain the exception rather than

the norm and is invariably left to underfunded and under-resourced NGOs; likewise, donors have been reluctant to prioritise such programmes. In the wider context Bulgaria has been, like many countries in the region, deeply affected by the financial crisis, reducing and/or distracting governmental attention away from the Roma issue. Simultaneously, there has been a rise of xenophobic debate in Bulgaria. A civil society monitoring report notes

> The main obstacle to Roma becoming equal citizens of Bulgaria is deeply rooted structural and societal discrimination. Social distances between Roma and non-Roma are widening and over the past five years the situation in this respect has been deteriorating, not improving. Cases of hate-speech and of direct discrimination on the part of institutions and individuals are frequent and are supported by the majority of the population in Bulgaria. (Decade for Roma Inclusion Secretariat–Bulgaria Report, 2012, p. 10)

The levels of school segregation have apparently increased in Bulgaria since 1990 (Russinov, 2015). The Roma Inclusion Index (Decade for Roma Inclusion Secretariat, 2015) notes the rate of Roma in special schools is 5 times the rate of the total population in Bulgaria.

Inclusive Strategies in the U.K.

In the U.K. Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities have been one of the most marginalised groups in the education system, a point recognised by the influential government report by Dame Plowden in 1967 (Ivatts, 2014). It was from this time that increasing focus was paid to improving the educational experiences of Gypsies, Roma and Travellers. The first steps involved the establishment of summer caravan schools by organisations like the Gypsy Council, which offered, through volunteers, on-site educational experiences. From the 1970s the emphasis was increasingly on mainstream educational integration, and some local authorities started to employ specialist staff to offer support in this process. By the 1980s government funding assisted in the establishment of specialist teams which became known as Traveller Education Support Services (TESS) (Ivatts, 2014). A common criticism of TESS is that Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils were somehow partitioned in the education system with TESS being directly involved in support and liaison leading to some schools abdicating to the TESS roles they should be performing. However, in the 21st century guidance and the dissemination of good practice led to TESS playing a more strategic role in guiding schools themselves to support Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children and improve home/school links.

Some of the most effective TESS have been able to recruit community members as support staff, working as classroom assistants. Some TESS have even supported Gypsy, Roma and Traveller adults to return to education and improve their literacy. Initiatives to improve home/school links has involved celebrating Gypsy, Roma and Traveller culture in school and involving parents as well as pupils in the organisation and delivery of these events. It was in Brent, London that Rocky Dean, a West Indian TESS teacher, established the first Gypsy Roma Traveller History Month in 2001, inspired by the long running national Black History Month (Acton & Ryder, 2012). The celebrations in Brent inspired a number of expert advisors to persuade the then Labour Government to establish a national Gypsy Roma Traveller History Month (GRTHM) in 2008 during the month of June. Lord Adonis, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Schools, approved the establishment of GRTHM and sets out his rationale with the following statement:

> I have endorsed a national Gypsy Roma and Traveller History Month ... This will offer us all the chance to raise awareness and explore the history, culture and language of these communities, which is not usually included in the curriculum for all pupils. We can challenge myths, tackle prejudice and be in a position to offer a balanced debate about the issues. We will be able to celebrate the richness that Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities bring to our everyday lives through their many varied academic and artistic achievements. (Cited in Acton & Ryder, 2012, p. 140)

Roma, Gypsy and Traveller NGOs came together to coordinate the government-sponsored Gypsy Roma and Traveller History Month (GRTHM) which encouraged schools, libraries and community groups to celebrate Gypsy, Roma and Traveller culture. GRTHM was heavily promoted in schools and was used by schools and community organisations as a means to build and develop home/school links. A consortium of groups was established to coordinate GRTHM, which was serviced by Patricia Knight, an English Gypsy; at a regional level there were regional community organisers. Knight speaks of the work of these organisers:

> GRTHM's reach and impact at a grassroots level was made possible by the voluntary involvement of the regional coordinators, who were all Gypsy, Roma or Travellers and esteemed educators, activists and campaigners in their own right. In their regions they held multi-agency planning meetings ... The enthusiasm, experience and dedication of these coordinators made the huge variety of initiatives in GRTHM possible and resulted in a cacophony of community voices—many heard for the first time speaking about our own history. (Cited in Acton & Ryder, 2012, p. 141)

GRTHM had effectively mobilised and captured the imagination of large sections of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities encouraging parents and pupils to work in partnership with schools and TESS; the hope was that GRTHM would have long-term implications in terms of home-school links. In 2010, a Coalition Government was formed in the U.K. with Conservatives leading the direction of the government in advocating austerity. GRTHM was a casualty of austerity cuts and no longer receives state funding, an act which has greatly curbed the scale of the month and prematurely ended a project that was beginning to yield impressive results.

Another consequence of austerity cuts has been the fragmentation of local authority Traveller Education Support Services, leading to the closure of, or severe reductions in, services and/or redundancies, developments that are impacting negatively on home/school links (Decade for Roma Inclusion Secretariat, 2014–UK Report). The continued marketisation and localisation of education through the extension of academy schools and introduction of free schools are also impeding improved home/school links with Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils. Academies are State funded schools in England which are directly funded by central government (specifically, the Department for Education) and independent of direct control by Local Government in England. Similarly, a free school is set up by an organisation or a group of individuals, funded by the government but not controlled by the local authority. For some time, fears have been expressed that academies and free schools might be less inclusive than local authority schools towards groups like Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils in terms of their admission procedures and support provided to such pupils where admitted (Decade for Roma Inclusion Secretariat, 2014–UK Report). Bureaucratic procedures and pre-entry banding/aptitude exams are claimed to deter marginalised groups from applying. Such highly autonomous schools are less inclined to be guided by local authority initiatives, which in the past have had an important strategic role in steering schools towards inclusive and collaborative

partnerships with marginalised communities like Gypsies, Roma and Travellers (Decade for Roma Inclusion Secretariat, 2014–UK Report).

Furthermore, the Coalition Government scrapped the Labour Government's regional spatial strategies that had set regional targets for Gypsy/Traveller sites and pitches for caravans. Instead localism gave local authorities greater scope to thwart, obstruct and reduce future site provision. Relations were further inflamed by the Coalition Government's failure to devise a strategy for the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies with Gypsy, Roma and Traveller community organisations complaining of being side-lined and ignored in this process (Decade for Roma Inclusion Monitoring Report, 2014). [4]

The Roma and Social Europe

In the two case studies discussed above it was revealed that good practice was being undermined through a weakening of political will and austerity policies which reduced the scope for innovative social policy and accentuated scapegoating towards Roma communities which further inhibits inclusive social policy agendas. The concept of "A Social Europe" which incorporates a vision of society based on solidarity, social justice and the view that economic wealth should be fairly distributed, without excluding or discriminating against groups or individuals (Ségol, 2012), may offer the policy template needed. Roma civil society has long maintained a call for a bolder Roma strategic policy framework with clear targets, timetables and budget allocations, and the prospect of interventions and sanctions where member states fail (Albert et al., 2015; McGarry, 2011). Europe is not a state with the mechanisms for a welfare state but it does have the capacity for supranational frameworks and laws (Kleinman, 2001). Sharpf (2002) argued that it should be through these that a Social Europe policy regime could be premised, constituting "hard law" as opposed to soft forms of governance. It has also been noted that more muscular European social policy approaches can be delivered through hybrid formulae encompassing both soft law through open method coordination and hard law (Trubek & Trubek, 2005). There has been widespread recognition of the need for a bolder policy framework as reflected in the proposal that EU funding should be conditional on member states' progress and input into the Roma Framework (Albert et al., 2015). Infringement proceedings being initiated by the European Commission towards the Czech Republic, as a precursor to possible legal action before the European Court of Justice, in response to Czech Government intransigence to desegregate schools, may be an indicator of a greater resolve and determination at the European level (OSI, 2014). Similar action has been initiated against Slovakia for breaching EU anti-discrimination legislation in its treatment of Roma school children.

Concerns have been expressed, however, that a Roma Strategy runs the risk of "Europeanising" the Roma issue, letting national governments abdicate their responsibilities and declare the Roma issue is now an EU one and no longer a national one (McGarry, 2011). Moreover, as Medrano (2012) argues, any call for greater European intervention in the sphere of social policy runs counter to the growth in euroscepticism. Thus in the development of a "Social Europe" a careful balance will be needed to ensure all tiers of government, namely European, national and local, are active partners in Roma inclusion and that through Habermas's (2011) ideal of European civic politics the public are persuaded to support such egalitarian projects. In this venture an effective and articulate Roma social movement will be required, capable of forming alliances with other movements and collaborative relationships with policy makers and institutions like schools, helping to ensure policies are relevant to localised domains and thus

avoiding reified interpretations by outsiders of who Roma communities are and what their needs may be.

Conclusion

Coleman (1988) correctly notes that social capital is a resource that can be mobilised by those at the margins to mitigate exclusion. However, social capital can take different forms. According to Woolcock (2001) these can include bonding social capital (which is close, intense and inward focused and often upheld by tradition and conservatism) or bridging social capital (open and welcoming of links with external groups). The nature and form of social capital adopted by any particular group is very much dependent on the physical and socio-economic environment the group is located within and relations with power elites. Putnam (2000) argues that political and institutional participation is shaped by types of social capital, with bridging being the most conducive to participation. In turn types of social capital adopted can be an important dynamic in shaping collective and group identity. Tradition and insularity but also fluidity and adaptiveness are common characteristics of Roma, Gypsy and Traveller communities and cultural identity. Depending to a degree on economic, institutional and spatial challenges and opportunities some of these communities have developed an ethnic identity that is bonding and traditionalist and encourages tight community networks to afford support and protection; such outlooks are more likely to be located amongst those communities that are highly isolated. In contrast other sections of these communities have emphasised the value of bridging and cosmopolitan outlooks, open to innovation. Such outlooks are more likely to be found where community leaders have been able to forge more inclusive relationships with institutions and secure gains for their communities and who correspondingly feel less isolated and alienated from wider society. Inclusive schools have a central role to play in enabling diverse communities to come together in tolerance and understanding by nurturing and working in tandem with bridging social networks. However, the work and value of schools in creating inclusive relationships with Roma communities has limitations without wider socio-economic change.

Alas in some Roma communities that vital ingredient to fuel community mobilisation and bridging forms of social networks, namely a “pedagogy of hope” (Freire, 1998), which sustains and binds transformative campaigns, is being sapped. For some Roma communities grinding poverty and inflexible services and institutions coupled with intense societal racism have served to disempower and spurred some to look to traditional coping mechanisms for answers and solutions. Culturally insular strategies can lapse into cultural conservatism creating ethnic enclaves which through forms of bonding social capital and reactive forms of identity can lead to internal forms of oppression and/or magical resistance (resistance which is misdirected). In his final writings the activist and scholar Nicolae Gheorghe was attentive to the lures and dangers of resorting to narrow notions of tradition, in particular where it revives old forms of community leadership relying on charismatic leadership, patronage and forms of oppression and which denies the value of formal education (Gheorghe & Pulay, 2013).

In addition, another feature of more neoliberal forms of governance combined with austerity has been a reluctance to develop more meaningful partnerships between government and civil society. Many Roma NGOs are contracting or facing closure due to underfunding, and what funding is available often shackles organisations to narrow and limited project work leaving little scope for innovation and manoeuvrability and correspondingly the prospect of community mobilisation.

The vision of a "Social Europe" which should encompass inclusive schools for Roma communities and a flourishing and bold civil society, at present seems remote and distant. In the present and increasingly monocultural and inflexible policy environment limited education and social policies alongside growing xenophobia are aggravating community tensions and the levels of trust and partnership between Roma communities and service providers like schools. These trends also diminish the advantages to be secured from inclusive forms of education, limiting opportunities to reorient and reinvigorate traditional life strategies in a new context without the danger of assimilation. As one U.K. Romany Gypsy has observed:

> Gypsies need education: they need to live in the 21st century. I'd like to live how we did when I was a child but we can't go back to those days. Most of them kids, they couldn't cope with that life but they need to be able to cope for this life.

Thus the challenge for schools in the 21st century is to offer learning environments that allow these and other minorities to simultaneously maintain their identity but also acquire new and adapt old skills. This paper argues that a prerequisite to such inclusive schooling is partnership and dialogue with Roma, Gypsy and Traveller communities but also a renewed social contract which encompasses recognition, redistribution and intervention.

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Notes

1 The estimate for a figure of 10-12 million Roma has been made by the Council of Europe http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/roma/index_en.htm. However, a note of caution needs to be

attached to estimates of the number of Roma in Europe on account of low self-ascription rates and/or the failure of national governments to ensure adequate ethnic monitoring procedures. In the article the term Roma is used for discussion related to Bulgaria and Europe but in the U.K. many Romanies prefer to be styled as Gypsies, and Irish Travellers are a Celtic group with nomadic traditions and practices similar to U.K. Gypsies, can be styled as Travellers. Since the 1990s a growing number of Roma migrants have come from Central Eastern Europe to the U.K., so in the U.K. we can speak of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities. The communities described have a great diversity of language, tradition, culture and religion; as with Jewish or Black people. What unites them most is the common experience of racism or anti-Gypsyism, which lumps them together, and can lead to common actions of resistance and solidarity and exploration of what they do have in common, without losing sight of their heterogeneity.

2 The author worked initially for Roma, Gypsy and Traveller organisations before transferring to teaching in higher education but has sought to fuse their activism and university experience through collaborative research projects

3 The Decade of Roma Inclusion was a collaboration between 12 European countries, encouraged by the World Bank and the Open Society Foundations, which started in 2005. The participating Governments made a promise to "close the gaps between Roma and the rest of society," and committed their domestic public institutions to fulfil this promise by 2015. As with the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies, which was modelled on the Decade for Roma Inclusion, participating states had to develop national strategies and a strong emphasis was placed on partnership with civil society and empowerment. http://www.romadecade.org/about-the-decade-decade-in-brief

4 A strategy was not developed in England and Northern Ireland but was by the devolved administrations in Scotland and Wales.

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